

and pursue a legislative remedy to a problem that is threatening to weaken Baseball's Minor League system.

Sincerely,

ROBERT A. DUPUY,
President & Chief Operating Officer.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of a letter addressed to me from Mark J. Sprinkle in support of amendment No. 4076, which was agreed to yesterday, amending S. 2611, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SENATOR: I returned home last night from my two weeks of Annual Training (AT) with the National Guard. I was able to meet many of the soldiers I will serve with in Iraq. They all seem great and I look forward to working with them to accomplish our mission of delivering fuel to units throughout the country. We did some excellent training in Hawthorne. We were able to see some examples of IEDs, work on convoy procedures and tactics, and do innovative things like firing M-16s from the windows of our moving trucks at targets 50 and 250 meters away. This training was enjoyable and it really tied into what we'll be doing over there.

When I got home, I caught a replay of the Armed Services Committee meeting regarding the role and mission of the National Guard on the border. I agree with the comments of Lt. General Blum of the NGB that the Guard will prove more than capable and effective in helping to secure the border. All people enjoy accomplishing tasks and helping others. I think it would be a great feeling for an engineer to build a road that will be there for decades and for a helicopter medevac crew-member to rescue a sick or injured person in the desert. It is a tremendous idea to use the Guard in this capacity. It will help units stay sharp and prepared by having them use the same skill sets that they will use in fulfilling their missions during natural disasters and in warzones. I also like the idea of having units rotate in during their two week AT. That would be great training and it sure beats sitting in an armory for 15 days. Your amendment to reimburse states with federal funds is great and I hope that governors will allow their units to assist the Border Patrol in accomplishing their vital mission of securing the border. Well Senator, just some thoughts and observations from your local guardsman.

Sincerely,

MARK J. SPRINKLE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

BREACH OF SECURITY WITHIN VA

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I come to the floor of the Senate briefly this evening to visit with my colleagues about an issue that we all now know about to some degree; and that, of course, is the very serious breach of security that occurred within the VA earlier this month.

My office, like yours, is lighting up with phone calls from concerned veterans wanting to know how this could happen and what type of risk they are facing.

So I thought I would take this moment, as the chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee in the Senate, to visit with my colleagues about it: No 1,

to lay out the facts as we know them—they are limited because this is an ongoing investigation and, therefore, the FBI has denied VA the right to talk in any great detail about this breach of security—and, No. 2, to provide all of you with some context in which to think about this issue.

First, what we know is that the information was taken to the home of a VA employee in violation of VA policy. We also know that the employee who took the information was authorized to view it. So this was not a case of unauthorized personnel looking at sensitive information. We also know that the employee was the person who brought the loss of the information to the attention of VA officials.

So what we have is an employee, authorized to view information, who took the information home, apparently to do work in violation of agency policy, and then immediately informed the agency when the theft of the data became apparent.

Certainly, the employee should face some consequence for his or her action. Obviously, he or she should have known not to remove that type of information from VA's protected data system. However, at this point, the actual removal of the data does not appear to be a crime at all.

Of course, the FBI is still investigating whether any criminal behavior occurred. At this point, they do not suspect any foul play on the part of this longtime Federal employee. Rather, they only suspect a random act of burglary at the employee's home that, unfortunately, compromised this very important information.

I must tell you that I struggle—a little—with the question of whether VA, or any Government agency, should keep information like the type that was lost without any real reason to do so. But I also know that when Americans contact their Government or veterans file a claim, they expect, in this day and age, that they will have their information. So there is a disconnect with what we expect and the security we expect it to be held with or if that information should be held at all.

So given the expectations of our consumers, in this case our constituents, I think we need to make sure we have a uniform set of guidelines for training our employees all across Government, and that then we work on putting in place a system with enough checks and balances to be sure that no employee can abuse information data bases of any agency.

Frankly, this problem is not likely limited to VA. Many Federal agencies keep records on citizens that contain sensitive information. It is not just IRS or HHS. There is information maintained by the Department of Education, that comes from the free application for Federal student loans or the Department of Agriculture, which provides crop assistance plans and crop insurance and a variety of other kinds of things.

All of these agencies have names and addresses and Social Security numbers. They must be secure. At the same time, we need employees who can use that information for legitimate purposes to serve our constituencies in a timely fashion.

All of this will require thoughtful balancing on the part of this Congress. We have to balance every doctor's need to see a veteran's medical records with the legitimate concern that one too many nurses on the floor have access to those records for no reason.

I hope what took place at the VA a few weeks ago is only an isolated incident of bad judgment by a dedicated employee seeking to do a little work at home on his or her own time. But we must not ignore the fact that it appears, at this time, that getting that information to his or her home was very easy. That cannot be tolerated because it may well have been a breach of policy but not a violation of law.

So my committee will hold hearings this Thursday with VA officials to examine what their policies and practices are with respect to sensitive information and how we can assure that a breach of security such as this does not happen in the future.

We will also be asking the right questions about the security of veterans themselves and if VA is doing all they possibly can do at this time now, along with the IRS and the Social Security Administration, to make sure that veterans whose names were on that list—some 26 million, of which 19 million had critical information—be treated fairly and responsive to assure, if we can, the protection of their information base.

It is fundamentally important that our Government and the Veterans' Administration respond as quickly as they can. And there is every indication, at least at this moment—which our hearing, I trust, will bear out—that they are moving in the right direction to assure that.

This may have been the largest breach of ID in our Nation's history. We need to make sure, as a Congress and as a Senate, that this cannot happen in the future and that there are exacting guidelines to assure this will not occur. In a day of electronic data and access that is unique and sometimes very easy, we need to make sure we are current with all of our needs, without providing names and information that is not necessarily needed to be held by our Government.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HURRICANE SEASON

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I know the debate today and for the past several days has been focused on immigration. The Presiding Officer has been active in the negotiations, and I commend him for his good work. It has been a tough debate on a very important issue—an issue of security, fairness, and justice. It is an issue of economics, and it affects all of our States. It affects what America stands for. We have spent an inordinate and appropriate amount of time on that subject.

Tonight, I come to the floor to speak about another issue very close to my heart and to the people of Louisiana, particularly with regard to the closeness of the arrival of the hurricane season. It is hard to believe that we are about ready to face another hurricane season again. June 1, a few days from now, is the first official day of the hurricane season. It comes this year bringing a lot more fright and anxiety to the gulf coast because we were hit by a powerful series of storms last year that devastated parts of Florida and a great part of the gulf coast from Mississippi through the whole of south Louisiana, into the city of New Orleans and the metropolitan area, and then on into Texas.

And two of those storms were the worst to hit the United States of America. The devastation and the amount of damage is still climbing. A report I saw today was that the damage is now \$150 billion and climbing. Hurricane Andrew, which was the greatest storm to hit the United States and to hit your State, Mr. President, was \$40 billion. We are now at \$150 billion and climbing. We have lost, of course, over 1,300 people. People were killed by the storms and the flooding that ensued from the multiple breaks in the levees that have put a major American city and region—not just New Orleans, but St. Bernard Parish and Plaquemines, which often get left out of the debate. They are two of the parishes that lie south of New Orleans, as they hold the Mississippi River, if you will, that splits their parishes in half. It affected the southwestern part of our State as well.

That doesn't get mentioned as much as it should—little towns such as Creole and big towns such as Lake Charles took a tough hit, and parishes such as Vermilion and little towns such as Erath, where almost every home was destroyed or very damaged.

Having said that, it added insult to injury that this particular coast that got battered so badly by these storms is also America's only energy coast. This is the only energy coast in America, the only four States that right now will allow drilling of oil and gas off their shores to provide for the economic vitality of this Nation and to provide the oil and gas necessary to run the electric grid in this country and the transportation systems in this country, and to run energy from lights to the entire energy grid.

I have been on this floor many times in my time in the Senate—now almost 10 years—to talk about this subject. I thought I would take a few minutes tonight, because we are approaching hurricane season, to remind the Senate that while immigration is a very important issue, and we want to bring closure to that this week, I hope that very soon we will get back to another issue of great interest and security for the Nation, and that is the issue of energy security. It starts, in my view, with providing some more understanding and more help to those States that are providing the oil and the gas for this Nation, as we seek to open up new places to drill in the Gulf of Mexico, which has become known as a section of the gulf called lease-sale 181. I hope that bill will be considered. It came out of the Energy Committee that the occupant of the chair and I serve on. I think that bill will come to the floor for some discussion.

As that bill moves to the floor and we move to the focus on energy and energy security, I want to take a few minutes to talk about this gulf coast area and how much we contribute and how, without some stream of revenue—whether we get it from lease-sale 181 or from other offshore drilling—to secure the wetlands that we are losing at an alarming rate, to provide some energy-related protection of this infrastructure, to provide for the restoration of these wetlands this energy coast will continue to be at risk.

If my colleagues and the people in Congress think that \$150 billion is a lot of money, just wait until we go through a couple more hurricane seasons to really feel the effect of underinvestment over time, to a point where it is almost criminal. Let me repeat—an underinvestment over time that borders on being criminal.

I have some new charts, since I have used all my old ones up for 10 years of this debate. This is a satellite photograph from USGS of all of the pipelines and flow lines in the United States off of the shore. I have come down here so many times to say that the offshore oil and gas industry could not even exist if it were not for the partnership, which we have done thus far proudly and willingly—but that is wearing thin—we have done it proudly and supported the oil and gas industry for now almost 45 years off of our shores. You can see this is the Louisiana coastline. This is the Mississippi coastline. This is Texas.

This is all of the pipelines and flow lines connecting thousands of wells that are in the Gulf of Mexico bringing oil and gas to a nation that is thirsty for oil and needing gas, because the supply is so low and the consumption is so high and the prices are going up. The four States that are putting their shoulder to the wheel every day are Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. This is the picture that proves it.

This is out on this map about 200 miles of activity. So for some people

who have said the drilling is so far off your coast that the people of Louisiana don't have anything to do with it, let me explain that you cannot access grids and rigs and oil and gas without pipelines, gadgets, widgets, drills, well heads, and supply boats. It is impossible. Every single widget, gadget, and supply boat either comes by boat or helicopter out of one of these many ports that have proudly supported this industry. You can see the line stops at the Mobile Bay. The reason is because Florida, which consumes more energy than almost any State relative to its lack of production—consumes but has not produced. Florida is not the only State. I could show you a chart of California and Michigan and New York—States that consume a lot of energy but have not been willing to produce it in any way, either by nuclear, by wind, or by strict conservation—except for California; I will give them credit for conservation measures. But other States won't do conservation or production.

I don't know if you can see this thin line. Last year, the industry went ahead, because of this policy, and laid a pipeline all the way to Florida to provide gas to Florida. But we have to drill it off of Alabama's coast and then send it to Florida free of charge.

I am going to show you another chart that says the same thing, but it is a little different. When I say that the gulf coast is America's only energy coast, this is another way to look at it. Every one of these green blocks—this goes out 200 miles into the gulf—were active leases prior to 2003. That is the green. They are active leases issued in 2003, which were the last lease-sales; 185, 187, and 189 are the light yellow. And then the red have been withdrawn from leasing. Not many. The active leases issued in 2004.

Basically, the green and yellow are leases. From these leases are produced, for the Federal Treasury—I remind everybody that we are running a serious deficit. So besides contributing oil and gas, we also contribute a lot of money to the Treasury. We are sending to the Federal Government every year \$6 billion. It was \$2 billion when I got here; now it is \$6 billion. Before I leave, it will probably go up to \$15 billion, assuming I can get here another term. So \$6 billion goes from the royalties by passing all of the communities here that build the widgets, gadgets, supply boats—over all the heads of the workers that drill, over all their homes that are underwater and ruined, over all of the wetlands that are being infringed upon, and in a fairly critical way.

Although we have made a lot of changes in our environmental laws, the problem is that a lot of these canals were drilled in the 1930s and 1940s. I am sorry, I wasn't born to try to help protect them then. But like my daughter said the other day, I am born now. We tried our best in the last couple of years, with the little money Louisiana had to do some of this work, but we